



County of Erie

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HEALTH ADVISORY # 279b

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Skin Infections in Local High School Wrestlers

Please distribute to Emergency Departments, Infection Control Departments, Employee Health Services, Infectious Disease Departments, Pediatrics, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Pharmacy, Laboratory Director and all patient care areas.

Summary

- The Erie and Niagara County Departments of Health, in cooperation with the New York State Department of Health, are investigating several cases of skin infection in high school wrestlers.
- Affected wrestlers participated in a high school wrestling tournament at Starpoint High School on Friday, February 4, 2011 and Saturday, February 5, 2011.
- Varsity and Junior Varsity wrestlers from several area high schools participated in the tournament.
- Health care providers are advised to be vigilant in examining and treating wrestlers with suspected skin infections.
- Skin infections that are commonly diagnosed among athletes include: *Herpes gladiatorum*, *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) including Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and tinea (ringworm).

Background

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) and the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) are currently investigating several cases of skin infection in high school wrestlers who participated in a tournament at Starpoint High School on February 4th-5th, 2011. Many of these skin infections are highly transmissible, therefore, secondary transmission following the February 4th and 5th meet is possible during subsequent matches and should be considered as points for further transmission.

Varsity and Junior Varsity wrestlers from Starpoint High School and the following high schools in Erie County participated in the tournament: Lakeshore, Williamsville East, Williamsville South, Hamburg, Sweethome, West Seneca East, Iroquois, Kenmore East, Grand Island and Amherst.

The high school wrestling season is at its peak with upcoming sectional and state championship meets scheduled.

Diagnosis

Health care providers are strongly encouraged to thoroughly examine wrestlers who present with or report the presence of skin rashes or lesions. Due to the direct skin to skin contact that occurs during wrestling matches, the potential for transmission of pathogens between wrestlers is significant. Appropriate diagnosis and treatment, along with exclusion from participation while skin infections are present is critical for interrupting disease transmission.

Common skin infections that affect wrestlers and other athletes with skin to skin contact include: *Herpes gladiatorum*, *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) including Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and tinea (ringworm) amongst others.

Additional information on skin infections among athletes can be found in the following locations:

- *Herpes gladiatorum* (“Mat Herpes”):
http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/athletic_skin_infections/herpes.htm
- Skin infections in athletes:
http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/athletic_skin_infections/for_more_info.htm

Because many skin infections may look similar, healthcare providers are encouraged to utilize available diagnostic procedures for differentiating causal agents when clinically relevant.

Reporting

Health care providers are asked to contact the ECDOH Disease Control Office at 716-858-7697 to report cases of skin infection diagnosed among high school wrestlers who participated in the February 4th-5th, 2011 wrestling meet at Starpoint High School and among those who participate in upcoming matches.

As always, outbreaks or clusters of skin infections or other illness should be reported as soon as they are identified.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding skin infections among high school wrestlers or other athletes, please contact the ECDOH Communicable Disease Control Office at 716-858-7697.

Additional information

New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA): www.nysphsaa.org

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. **You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at www.erie.gov/health/services/health_professionals.asp.**

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